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U.S. NATIONAL HOUSING AGENCY

Housing is drafted for war

B.C.S.

HOUSING

IS DRAFTED FOR WAR

☆ *Here is Information*

For the person who asks:

Why can't I build a house?

And for the person who says:

No houses ought to be built
when materials are so scarce!

February 1943

NATIONAL HOUSING AGENCY, Washington, D. C.

Office of the Administrator

Housing is an imperative need . . .

"This war involves a total national effort and industrial mobilization. Industry cannot effectively mobilize and plants cannot expand with sufficient rapidity unless there are enough houses to bring the worker to the job, keep him on the job, and maintain his efficiency and morale . . . Consistent reports from all over the country indicate a rising need for housing, running far ahead of the supply and threatening seriously to reduce the effective use of these plants unless remedied at once."

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT in a message to Congress.

But it must contribute to the war effort . . .

"We cannot afford to continue to expend our substance in these times otherwise than in support of the war effort and . . . public and private construction programs must be diverted into channels which will contribute directly to winning the war."

DONALD M. NELSON, *Chairman, War Production Board.*

Therefore, only actual war housing can be built . . .

"We must build housing for in-migrant war workers. When migration stops . . . We must release the critical materials to tanks, ships and planes . . ."

JOHN B. BLANDFORD, Jr., *Administrator, National Housing Agency.*

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Why Is War Housing Needed?

To win the war, we must produce a steady, swelling stream of munitions with which to arm our fighting men and those of our allies. War production demands adequate supplies of men, machines and materials at the right places at the right times. We have had to build new factories, convert and expand old ones. For speed and efficiency, production activities have been concentrated in certain localities. Manpower requirements in these places have multiplied. In many of them, the local labor supply has been inadequate and workers have had to be brought in to help man the production lines.

These workers must have places to sleep: their families must have places to live. Otherwise, they leave.

What Restricts Building?

Obviously, a great deal of war housing is needed, but over all—controlling the war housing program just as it controls the munitions production program—is the scarcity of materials. Metals and wood needed for new houses or to renovate older dwellings are also needed for barracks, factories, planes, tanks, guns, and ships. Our supplies of the most important of these materials are not large enough to meet all the demands for them.

Any proposed housing, therefore, must meet the test: Is it vital to the war?

How Does Housing Get Materials?

The War Production Board recognizes that war workers must have places to sleep in order to produce. Accordingly, it allots war housing a share of the scarce materials. Housing's share, however, is insufficient to satisfy the need for new accommodations. The Government must determine where the need is most acute and then, sparingly, apportion the available supply.

To make sure that every pound of these materials goes to house a war worker, and then only where the need is imperative, the most careful planning and programming is required.

When Is War Housing Authorized?

War housing is built in a community when production is expanded so that the labor supply must be increased by large numbers of additional workers.

The War Manpower Commission studies the production schedules, manpower requirements, and local labor supply. It makes every effort to obtain full use of that labor supply through measures which include special training

of workers, recruiting of women never before employed in industry, and employment of persons living within reasonable commuting distance of the war activity. When, with all this, the local labor supply cannot fill the needs, the War Manpower Commission estimates the number of workers who must be brought into the locality—and for whom homes must be found.

This estimate is turned over to the National Housing Agency (NHA), whose Regional Representative then prepares a "War Housing Program."

What Kind of Shelter Is Provided?

The first step is to forecast, as closely as possible, in cooperation with the War Manpower Commission, the probable family size of these incoming workers—how many will come as single men and women, how many as members of two-person families, and how many as members of families of three or more persons. The NHA Regional Representative must keep in mind shifting conditions that change this picture of family composition. An example of these changing trends is the growing number of workers migrating with larger families, as the armed forces take more of the single and younger married men.

With these estimates, the NHA plans how to house the in-migrants. Obviously, with the allowable construction so strictly limited by the scarcity

of materials, new housing cannot be scheduled for all of these workers and their families. First reliance must be placed on existing housing for as many of the workers as possible. This is especially true in larger cities, which have the capacity to absorb most if not all the incoming single workers and two-person families, and some of the larger family groups, without new construction.

Smaller communities and rural areas with new war activities generally require proportionately more new housing, but even here some dwelling units in existing buildings can often be found within reasonable travel distance.

The war housing program can meet the need only by the maximum use of existing housing in many over-crowded areas—at least three persons for every four rooms. This stringent wartime policy is designed to save utilities, transportation and labor as well as materials.

How Can the Community Help?

The NHA asks home owners in all crowded production centers to take in war workers for the duration. To assist in creating more living units, particularly for families, the NHA recently launched a home lease and conversion program—but it will be carried on only in communities where the War Guest program cannot meet the need.

Briefly, the NHA makes these appeals in the communities where the most critical housing shortages exist:

1. It urges property owners to make available to war workers and their families all vacant houses, apartments, and rooms, suitable for use without the necessity of alterations—and the expenditure of critical materials.

2. It urges the owners of other properties, not now suitable for use, to convert them into additional units with their own funds or the assistance of financing institutions.

3. If property owners are unable or unwilling to take this step, the NHA offers to lease houses and buildings in the name of the Government and convert them with Government funds. This leasing program is confined to certain "super-critical" communities.

Accommodations provided by all types of conversion must be rented to in-migrant war workers. Full information on this program can be obtained from the War Housing Centers and Homes Registration Offices established by the Homes Use Service of the NHA in critical war housing areas.

The War Guest and conversion programs will require sacrifices from many home owners and workers. Often accommodations provided by doubling up will not be as comfortable, spacious, or attractive as the workers and their families would desire or can afford. Not even modernization of existing housing can be permitted unless it produces additional quarters for war workers.

Who Builds New War Housing?

New housing now is scheduled for a community only after all the accommodations which can be provided by full use of existing structures is taken into consideration, and the estimated in-migration still exceeds the quarters available.

Where new houses must be built, it is a basic policy of the NHA to ask private builders to provide all the family units which can be absorbed by a community after the war and which they can construct under (1) war-time restrictions of cost, location, building time, standards of design and material consumption; (2) rental and sale limitations imposed to fit the needs and incomes of war workers. The restrictions imposed on building are not arbitrary exercise of authority but are designed to turn the limited supplies of materials into as many actual war-housing accommodations as possible.

When is Public War Housing Built?

To the extent that private industry does not find it feasible to build, then public war housing must be provided. It is built and managed through the Federal Public Housing Authority, a unit of the NHA, which may perform these functions itself or assign them to other Federal or local agencies. Because of the shortage of materials and the need for speed, the emphasis in public housing is now on temporary construction. For single workers, the standard new accommodations will be dormitories; for two-person families, small temporary dormitory apartments will be built; while the regular family dwelling units will be of minimum size for their purpose and of temporary construction.

Public war housing should not be confused with subsidized housing for low-income families. For the duration of the war, Government-financed housing is directed to only one purpose—the shelter of war workers and their families.

The NHA is continuously engaged in research and experimentation that already has led to major conservation of critical materials in both public and private war housing through simplification of design and the use of substitute materials. Many of these innovations can be turned to the benefit of home builders after the war; right now, they are cutting down the use of critical materials by 60 to 70 percent even on family units.

Why Must Housing Programs be Revised Frequently?

The housing program for each community is subject to constant revision despite the careful planning and factual study that goes into its preparation. The continually fluctuating manpower requirements, material supplies, labor, transportation, utilities, and the strategic demands of a global war—all affect the housing supply and demand. The program is never static nationally or locally and must be kept fluid to meet new conditions.

How Big is the War Housing Need?

Figures constantly are changing on the millions of workers the War Manpower Commission finds will be needed before our full war production capacity has been reached. Suffice it to say that developments from July 1940 to date have called for some 3,000,000 war-housing units, of which about 1,700,000 were sought from existing buildings and some 1,300,000 units were scheduled for new construction.

At the end of 1942, about half of the new units had been built, one quarter were under construction and the other quarter already programmed. It is impossible to report exactly the number of accommodations provided by existing structures but the failure of war workers to obtain satisfactory quarters in many crowded cities and towns proves the number is not enough.

Here was the situation at the start of 1943. There were 78,000 units under construction by private industry and 168,000 more scheduled; there were 214,000 units under construction with government funds and 170,000 more scheduled. They will not be enough, for migration is continuing—and yet materials daily become more scarce. The only answer to the problem is the production of more accommodations through existing structures, the task in which the Homes Use Service of the NHA is trying to help but which is essentially the job of war-industry communities themselves.

What is the National Housing Agency?

In order to coordinate and concentrate the activities of all Government agencies that could help with the war housing program, the President created the National Housing Agency by Executive Order on February 24, 1942. The NHA's three constituent operating units are:

The Federal Housing Administration, whose primary tasks now are to provide mortgage insurance on private war housing and to receive and process for the War Production Board applications from private builders for priority assistance.

The Federal Public Housing Authority which builds all publicly-financed war housing except that on Army and Navy reservations. It

includes the former United States Housing Authority, the Defense Homes Corporation, and the nonfarm home building activities of other federal agencies.

The Federal Home Loan Bank Administration, which supervises the Federal Home Loan Bank System, the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation, and the Home Owners' Loan Corporation. Member thrift and home-financing institutions of the Bank System are active in financing private war housing. The HOLC handles the entire Government-lease program for the Homes Use Service of the NHA.

Over these agencies, providing planning and programming and general staff services, is the Office of the Administrator of the NHA. For greater flexibility and clearer understanding of local problems, the Office of the Administrator operates through ten Regional Offices, each in the charge of a Regional Representative who is directly responsible for programming war housing for the localities in his area.

How Far Can NHA Go?

With this organization, the NHA operates within a clearly defined triangle to perform its functions as a partner in war production. Congress, of course, provides funds for public war housing and determines the general

policies for both the public and private programs. The War Production Board determines war production schedules, adjusts requirements against the available stocks of materials, and allocates the critical materials for both the military program and housing. The triangle is completed by the War Manpower Commission, which fills the demands for labor from war industries and determines where and in what numbers workers are needed.

Purchasing Power No Longer Rules

In wartime, there is room for only one class of construction—that which will immediately and definitely further the war effort. All other housing must await the return of peace, no matter how urgent the accumulated backlog needs of the Nation or of individual communities. The financial ability of a home seeker gives him no more right to build a house than money alone entitles him to buy new tires, new automobiles, or unlimited supplies of sugar, coffee or other rationed goods. The ever-growing demands of war require that housing be rationed as strictly as other scarce commodities.

This is war and the decision of the American people is clear when the choice is between using vital materials for guns or for new homes. All war housing is restricted to indispensable in-migrant war workers—going into a community solely to do a war job.

This is not the decision of the National Housing Agency—nor of the War

Production Board, which controls materials—nor of the Army or the Navy, which take the materials which could be used for housing. It is the decision of a Nation which has gone to war.



Regional Offices of the National Housing Agency

Region 1: Boston, Mass. (24 School St.); Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont.

Region 2: New York City (2 Park Ave.); New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania.

Region 3: Washington, D. C. (910 17th St. NW.); Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, Panama Canal, Puerto Rico.

Region 4: Atlanta, Ga. (114 Marietta St.); Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, North Carolina.

Region 5: Cleveland, Ohio (1783 East 11th St.); Kentucky, Ohio, Michigan, West Virginia.

Region 6: Chicago, Ill. (221 North La-Salle St.); Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin.

Region 7: Kansas City, Mo. (1006 Grand Ave.); Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Utah, Wyoming.

Region 8: Dallas, Tex. (1907 Elm St.); Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas.

Region 9: Seattle, Wash. (Third Ave. and Union St.); Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Alaska.

Region 10: San Francisco, Calif. (593 Market St.); California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii.

NATIONAL HOUSING AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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